

CITY OF NEWTON,
Massachusetts.

REPORTS OF
BOULEVARD COMMISSION.

EDWIN B. HASKELL, EDMUND W. CONVERSE.

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December, 1893.



Newton Upper Falls,
FANNING PRINTING CO.,
1893.

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REPORTS OF BOULEVARD COMMISSION.

To His Honor the Mayor and the City Council of Newton:

The undersigned, members of a Commission appointed to consider and report as to a system of Boulevards for the City of Newton, herewith, for what seems to be good and sufficient reasons, submit a partial report.

The Commission began its labors by hearings and otherwise early in the year, with the understanding that it had ample time to study the question committed to it and to make a single, complete and comprehensive report. It soon became apparent that land owners between the city line near Chestnut Hill Reservoir and Centre Street, who were prepared to make a liberal proposition to the city for a boulevard through that section, were unwilling, if not unable, to wait for the final report of the Commission. These land owners, after a hearing before us, made a direct appeal to the City Government. Their petition and proposition were referred to the Highway Committee, with instructions for that committee to confer with the Boulevard commission. We received official notice of this action and thereupon proceeded to a more special examination of the route proposed between the Newton and Boston line on South Street and Centre Street at the junction of Grafton. We heard the parties in interest as fully as they desired, and held ourselves in readiness to confer with the Highway Committee. That committee very properly decided to take the time necessary to secure careful surveys of the line and estimates of the cost of construction, and the commission turned its attention to a practicable route for extending the proposed boulevard through the city, thinking it desirable to be able to report upon one complete line. The Commission is unanimously

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of the opinion that, whatever may be recommended later, a central boulevard, running on a substantially east and west line through the city, deserves and should receive the first consideration of the City Council. We are pleased to be able to report that in pursuing our investigations to this end, we have found the land owners on a continuation of this central line through the city from Centre Street to Auburndale, keenly alive to the desirability of this public improvement and ready to meet the Commission with commendable liberality.

The propositions which we have received from proprietors along the proposed route, usually acting harmoniously together, in different sections, make very favorable terms for the city, and by means thereof, this great improvement may be made now at comparatively small expense.

The proposition of the land owners on the first or eastern section, from the Newton and Boston line to Centre Street, which is in the hands of the Highway Committee, is to contribute the land required to make a boulevard one hundred and twenty feet wide and twenty-five thousand dollars in money. This cash contribution, by rough estimate, would be about one-third the cost of construction. The additional propositions we have received, which are herewith submitted, present about as favorable terms for the extension from Centre Street by the plan which accompanies this report, to a point on Auburn Street, Auburndale, a few rods east of Maple Street.

Thus far we have not been able to find a practicable route to carry the boulevard at its full width through to the Charles River, at the western boundary of Auburndale, there to connect with the Auburndale Riverside Park and the projected improvements on the Weston side. The plan presented herewith, shows what may be done on this line. Propositions in regard to this part of the boulevard, which is essential to its completeness, will be made hereafter.

In accordance with the foregoing, we recommend that the city government lay out and construct a boulevard on the proposed line from the Newton and Boston line on South Street to the point above mentioned on Auburn Street, one hundred and twenty feet wide where practicable, with two roadways, each twenty

feet wide reserving a space thirty feet wide in the centre for a double track electric railroad, with sidewalks and trees, and a space of reasonable width for bicycles.

The propositions made by land owners are subject to the conditions that the contributions offered are to be accepted in lieu of betterments on the property of those contributing. We make no recommendation as to that condition, preferring to leave the matter to the judgment of the city government after a more detailed survey of the route and more careful estimates of the cost of construction, than we have been able to make in this partial and necessarily hasty report.

Respectfully submitted,

E. B. HASKELL,
E. W. CONVERSE,
J. R. LEESON,

NEWTON, MASS., May 15, 1893.

*To His Honor the Mayor and the City Government of
Newton:*

GENTLEMEN:—The Commissioners appointed under the order of Dec. 12, 1892, “to consider and report to the City Council previous to January 1, 1894, as to a system of boulevards which shall be for the improvement of the unoccupied and other territory of the City of Newton,” respectfully submit the following report:

Your Commissioners have felt justified in construing their instructions to take a broad view of the needs of our growing city for the years to come. The population of Newton has doubled in about twenty years in the past, and it is not unreasonable to presume that it will reach fifty thousand in twenty-five years, and one hundred thousand in fifty or sixty years. Improvements can undoubtedly be made at less expense now than later. We have a territory exceptionally favorable for residences, and if our avenues of communication are made adequate and of a good character, it will be rapidly filled with attractive and comfortable homes.

It has seemed advisable to your Commissioners to provide ample east and west avenues from the Boston line through Newton to accommodate and make safe business and pleasure travel, and to widen such north and south streets as may be needed to a capacity sufficient to make rapid transit safe where the public convenience may demand it.

With this general view in mind, exceptional circumstances easily turned our attention to the consideration of a central east and west boulevard, extending the Boston boulevards through our territory, and led us to make a special report thereon. This report, endorsed by the Highway Committee, is now before the City Council. The careful estimates of the committee show that great improvement can be made with comparatively small expense to the city.

Our report on that boulevard related to its extension as far west as Washington Street, leaving its continuation through Auburndale to the Weston line for further investigation. The present report will show the completion of our work on that line

and contains all the recommendations in regard to other avenues which we have thought wise and reasonable to make. We have endeavored while studying the public requirements, to consider the rights and convenience of individuals, as well as the cost to the taxpayers, and we believe that our conclusions are as conservative as they should be under the circumstances. We have not been able to make estimates of cost, but have left that work to be done by the City Council if it sees fit to favor our recommendations. In two cases we have presented alternative plans, to be selected from, after more thorough investigation.

The first thing naturally considered after our special report on the central east and west boulevard was the extension of that boulevard to the city boundary on the Charles River. It seems desirable to make a route as direct as practicable to the Weston line, where the projected improvements on the Weston side of the river will make an objective point desirable to reach. These improvements include a park extending from Weston bridge to Riverside, on land given by a public spirited citizen of Weston, and the newly acquired grounds of the Athletic Club, to be fitted up for the accommodation of all sorts of out-door athletic exercises. Some difficulties were encountered in finding a practicable route through the narrow streets of Auburndale. Two plans were considered.

As Woodland Avenue could not be widened without entailing too great expense, the next best thing seems to be to extend the boulevard by a street eighty feet wide from Washington Street at the junction of Fuller, parallel with Woodland Avenue and about four hundred feet north of it, to Grove Street, thence diagonally to the Auburn Street bridge over the railroad, with the exception of three estates, this route would be entirely through unimproved land, and a majority of the owners would make favorable terms. The alternative route is to begin as above, continue westerly, parallel with Woodland Avenue between eight and nine hundred feet, thence curve to the north and reach Auburn Street, by the line of a new street recently constructed through land of F. Johnson. In any case, Auburn Street should be widened to at least sixty feet from its junction with Washington Street, to the business square of Auburndale. This street has

a good deal of heavy traffic from Weston and the towns beyond, and it is likely to be increased in the future. To accommodate the pleasure travel from the Auburndale Square to the river we recommend the widening of Ash Street to at least sixty feet to the intersection of Bourne Street, and that a new street, eighty feet wide, be constructed through the city land and the unoccupied land of the Fowle and Holbrook estates to the river, thence following the river to a junction with Auburn Street near the Weston bridge. This route gives direct access to the Auburndale river park, which abuts on Ash Street, and fairly direct to the proposed park at Weston. Auburn Street from the Weston bridge to the business square, Auburndale, would be left for business traffic. The western outlet for the central boulevard by this route would be reasonably convenient and agreeable.

The next matter considered was the widening of Washington Street. This improvement is imperatively demanded on the ground of safety. On nearly the whole length of this street electric lines are operated or projected. Cars are running from Newton to West Newton, and a line from West Newton to Lower Falls has secured a right of way. The business traffic through Newton is largely on this street. Driving on it is positively dangerous today.

The Commissioners have carefully considered the conditions, always bearing in mind the expense to be incurred, and recommend that Washington Street, from the Wellesley line at Newton Lower Falls to the junction of Beacon Street, be widened where practicable to seventy feet, at some points it would cost too much to secure this width; from Beacon Street through West Newton and Newtonville to Newton, at the junction of a new street now suggested to connect Eldredge and Washington Streets; that Elmwood and Park Street to Tremont; that Tremont Street from Park Street to the Boston line in the direction of Oak Square, all be widened to seventy-five feet. In case the suggestion as to the extension of Eldredge Street be not adopted, the widening of Washington Street should continue to the junction of Park Street; Park Street from Washington to Tremont to a uniform width of seventy-five feet, thence as herein proposed to the Boston line.

We should be glad to see this great avenue through the city

made wider than we have recommended, but an examination shows that any increase above seventy-five feet would be attended by too great expense to be justified by the increased convenience. The width we recommend will secure reasonable convenience and safety.

Our attention was next called to the need of at least two wider north and south avenues east of that part of Washington Street which runs from West Newton to Newton Lower Falls.

Walnut Street was first taken up, as that street is already occupied by an electric railway. We are of the opinion that it is a mistake wherever a location is granted for an electric railway on any street of the ordinary width without a provision for widening, and our judgment is against such action in the future. With the existing conditions on Walnut Street, we recommend that from the railroad to the High School building it be widened to seventy feet, from the High School building to Griffin avenue to eighty feet, and from Griffin avenue to Centre street to seventy feet. The proprietors of unimproved land between the High School building and Griffin Avenue have evinced a disposition to meet the city with liberal propositions for this part of the improvement, while the importance of such an avenue to Newtonville, a rapidly growing village, is generally appreciated.

We have found grave difficulties to be encountered in securing a wider avenue from Newton to Newton Centre. There has already been a call for rapid transit between these villages, but so far no location has been granted. It is not improbable that the public convenience will in the near future make a demand which the enterprise of electric railway builders has already anticipated. There is no existing route over which an electric road could be operated with safety to the citizens. To provide a location for an electric railway, should the call for it become imperative, two plans are here suggested. Centre street, the most direct route, seems to be out of the question. The cost of widening would be too heavy, and the beauty of the street as it is makes its preservation desirable. We considered Waverley Avenue as a possible route, but found vigorous opposition from all the proprietors north of Sargent street. South of Sargent street the proprietors were generally favorable to the improve-

ment. It would be possible to widen Park Street, and Park Avenue to Cotton Street, and then make a new street through vacant land which offers favorable conditions for construction to the new boulevard, south of Ward Street. By widening Centre Street from the new boulevard to Newton Centre which could be easily done on the west side as far as Willow Street, and on the east side from Willow to Beacon, which should be done in any event, a practicable route for rapid transit could be secured, over Park Street, Park Avenue, the new street, the boulevard and Centre Street. Careful investigation, however, shows that the northern part of this route could be more advantageously made by widening Eldredge Street and extending it to Washington, and constructing a new street from the southern end of Eldredge through a natural depression near Centre Street southeasterly to and over a portion of Hyde Avenue, thence diagonally to the northern end of Park Avenue. Either of these routes would encounter difficulties and expense in the thickly settled part of the village north of Sargent Street. It is not impossible that the Waverley avenue route might on the whole, be found more favorable than either of the above.

Beacon Street is now seventy feet wide, for a large part of the distance from the Boston line to Centre Street. We recommend that it be widened to the same width for the whole distance.

We recommend that Centre Street, Winchester Street and Needham street, forming a direct and continuous line from Newton Centre to the Needham line be widened as follows: From Beacon street to the railroad crossing to a width of seventy feet; from the railroad crossing to the Needham line to a width of eighty feet.

One of the most attractive improvements suggested in the recent discussions of parks, parkways, boulevards and public reservations is a driveway following the Charles River from the basin and embankments in Boston through the whole metropolitan district to Dedham, returning to the city through parkways already projected and nearly finished. Such a way would connect the increasing public reservations on the river, by means of which it is hoped to secure nearly the whole of both

banks of the river in public ownership, for sanitary as well as esthetic purposes. On account of the different municipalities interested, if that great improvement is ever accomplished, it must be done by some such general agency as the Metropolitan Park Commission. Newton should be prompt to do its part whenever the time comes, for to no other city or town would it be of greater benefit. Such an avenue would follow the city's boundaries for a large part of the whole distance on three sides, and would charmingly supplement our interior communities.

Your Commissioners have examined with great interest the report of Albert F. Noyes, late City Engineer, and Edward A. Buss, Civil Engineer, on a plan for Surface Drainage, involving the improvement of the water-ways in our territory, and providing for the proper location of new streets for the development of land as yet unimproved. They desire to give the plan presented, their unqualified approval, and hereby recommend that as rapidly as practicable all the water-ways of those parts of the city where more perfect surface drainage is required, be brought under the treatment suggested by the engineers. A good illustration is furnished by the improvement undertaken in the valley of the lower Cheesecake Brook. A similar improvement has been partially provided for on the brook between Newtonville Avenue and Cabot Street, and this should be continued through the whole length of the brook to Centre Street, and beyond as indicated by the engineer's report. This valley has many beautiful features, and the desirability of reserving a considerable area of land for a park south of Cabot Street has been forcibly impressed upon us while pursuing our investigations in that section. In most of the cases where the improvement of the water-ways should be undertaken, owners of the land could well afford to co-operate with the city by liberal contributions, thereby diminishing the public expenditures. The contiguous lands, considerable areas in some cases, would be largely increased in value by thorough drainage and by a plan of development which would make the lands higher than the avenue.

In order to assist in the furtherance of the suggestions herein outlined, your commission submit the draft of an act of similar character to legislation enacted within recent years, in this state,

with such enlargement of its scope as would seem to be required by the local conditions in the City of Newton.

We cordially extend our thanks to His Honor the Mayor, the members of the City Council, and the City Engineer's department, for courtesies and assistance.

Summary of Recommendations.

1. To extend the new boulevard from Washington Street by a single roadway of eighty feet to Auburn, by one of two plans proposed above.

2. To make an outlet from the boulevard to the Charles River by widening Ash Street, and making a new street from Ash at Bourne Street to the river, and thence to a junction with Auburn Street near Weston Bridge.

3. To widen Auburn Street from Washington Street to the bridge over the railroad to at least sixty feet.

4. To widen Washington Street from the Wellesley line at Lower Falls to Beacon Street, to seventy feet where practicable; from Beacon Street to a proposed extension of Eldredge street; to make the proposed extension of Eldredge Street; to widen Elmwood, Park and Tremont Street to the Boston line to seventy-five feet.

5. To widen Walnut Street from the railroad crossing to the High School building to seventy feet; thence to Griffin Avenue to eighty feet; thence to Centre Street to seventy feet.

6. Two plans suggested in case rapid transit is granted from Newton to Newton Centre.

7. To widen Beacon Street from Boston line to Centre to seventy feet.

8. To widen Centre Street from the crossing of the new boulevard to the railroad crossing near Paul Street to seventy feet, thence to its end, and Winchester and Needham streets, to the Needham line, to eighty feet.

9. To carry out as rapidly as practicable the plan made by the engineers, Messrs. Noyes and Buss, for the improvement of the water-ways of Newton.

Plans illustrating our recommendations are herewith submitted.

Respectfully submitted,

E. B. HASKELL,	}	Commission on Boulevards.
E. W. CONVERSE,		
J. R. LEESON,		

Additional Report.

Since the completion of the report of the Boulevard Commission, and before the transmission of that report to the City Council, the time limit upon which were based certain propositions in regard to the central east and west boulevard between Valentine and Washington streets, has expired. The commission is informed that while preliminary action was taken upon those propositions by the City Council, such action was of a conditional character, and not final.

With this understanding, the commission, at the request of the owners of real estate in the section referred to, reached a decision to re-open the hearings, in so far as relates to this particular branch of the report. At those hearings, certain amended propositions were laid before the commission, in favor of the Fuller Street route heretofore recommended by the commission in its preliminary report. Definite propositions were also presented to the commission in favor of a route north of Fuller Street, known as the Northern Route on that line. These propositions in regard to the same, are herewith presented to the City Council for such action thereupon, as may seem to the council wise and expedient. The line of this northern route is shown as an alternative proposition on the plan of the east and west boulevard accompanying these reports, all of which are respectfully submitted.

E. W. CONVERSE.

J. R. LEESON.

**An Act Relating to the Location and Laying Out of
Streets, Parks and Drains in the City of Newton.**

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court Assembled and by the Authority of the same as follows :

SECT. 1. The Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Newton shall within thirty days from the passage of this act appoint three able and discreet persons, qualified voters in said city, who together with the Mayor and City Engineer and their successors in office shall constitute a park and drainage commission. Said commission shall hold office for the term of three years from the date of their appointment, unless the work which they are hereby authorized to do is sooner completed. Any vacancy occurring shall be filled in the same manner as said original appointment and said members so appointed may be removed by the Mayor with the consent of the Aldermen. The salaries and expenses of said board shall be determined by the City Council of said City of Newton. Said commission may employ such assistants and incur such expense as it deems necessary for the execution of the provisions of this act, so far as money therefor may be appropriated by the City Council of said City of Newton.

SECT. 2. Said commission shall with all reasonable dispatch cause to be made under its direction, plans of such territory or sections of land in said city as it deems necessary or the City Council shall direct, showing thereon existing water-courses and valleys, and the location, grades and required sections or carrying capacity of said water courses, so far as may be considered necessary for the complete and proper carrying of the estimated quantity of water that should be provided for through said valleys or water courses, and also the width or amount of land necessary to be entered upon for the proper construction and maintenance of drains or water-ways to be used therefor. Said plan shall also show such existing buildings, streets, property lines and other data as may be required for a proper determination of such location indicated, but inaccuracies and omission of such information shall not render such plans invalid.

SECT. 3. The making and filing of plans as herein provided of existing water ways and valleys shall make said water-courses, public water courses, for the purpose of the removal of ground and surface water in their respective locations at the time of said filling and until the location thereof is changed, and shall also define the width upon which the city is authorized to enter for the purpose of constructing, maintaining and repairing the same for such purposes, and no building shall be erected within the width defined upon said plan, except by authority of said commission or said City of Newton and with the condition that the same shall be removed whenever required by said city or said commission. No person or corporation shall enter any drain or sewer into any such water-course, nor conduct any sewage or drainage matter or pollution of any kind therein, nor into any water-course, channel or stream, natural or artificial, connected therewith, and shall not injure, destroy, divert or obstruct any such water-course. Said City of Newton is hereby authorized from time to time, to enter upon said portions indicated upon said plans for the purposes of building, deepening, improving, maintaining and repairing the channels of said water-courses in any portion thereof, and to drain land abutting thereupon and adjacent thereto, and use any portion of such land and take therefrom stones, earth or other material so far as the same may be necessary or convenient in effecting such improvement. Said city when it has commenced to improve any such water-course or portion thereof, shall use all reasonable diligence to complete said work begun.

SECT. 4. Said commission shall also cause to be made plans to be entitled "Plans for Highways and Parks" of such portion of the city as its City Council shall direct, or as said commission shall deem necessary, showing therein the location of existing streets, ways and parks, and all such streets, ways and parks, whether already laid out or not, as said commission shall be of the opinion the present or future necessity of the city shall require within the territory upon said plans, showing clearly the direction, width grade and boundary lines of such streets, ways and parks.

SECT. 5. The completion and filing as herein provided of

any such plan named in section four, shall define the locations for streets, ways and parks in the portion covered by such plan. No person or corporation shall, after the passage of this act, prepare or open for public travel any way in the portion of said city not covered by said plan, unless its location, direction, width, and grade is satisfactory to and approved in writing by said commission, or by the City Council. No person or corporation shall, after the filing of any such plan, prepare or open for public travel, any street or way in the territory shown upon said plan, unless its location, direction, width and grade are in accordance with those shown on such plan, and no public sewer, drain, water pipe or lamp shall be placed in, or public work done in any way other than in or on said ways as shown on said plan or plans of such territory; provided, however, that this provision shall not prevent the laying of a trunk sewer or a water or gas main as engineering demands shall require.

SECT. 6. Before making any plan herein provided, said commission shall give a hearing and due notice thereof to all parties interested, and after the making of said plan and before adopting and recording the same, shall give a like notice and hearing and shall keep said plan open to public inspection for two months after the first notice of said second hearing, and before the date thereof. Notice shall be given of each such hearings and the placing of each such plan open to public inspection in, at least, two newspapers published in said city, once a week for three successive weeks, before the hearing or placing of said plan open to public inspection. Said plan after said hearings and after being kept open to public inspection as herein provided, and after such alterations shall have been made thereon as may be deemed necessary by said board, shall be marked as made under the provisions of this act; be signed and approved by a majority of said board and then filed in the office of the City Engineer of said City of Newton, and the date of the filing be written thereon and attested by said City Engineer. Every plan so signed and attested shall be prima facie evidence that said plan and all data made thereon are under the authority of and in accordance with the provisions of this act.

SECT. 7. The powers of the City Council of said City of

Newton, shall not be abridged by this act, except so far as to determine locations, directions, widths and grades for streets and ways, and locations for drains.

SECT. 8. Said commission may enter into and upon any land so far as it deems necessary to carry out the aforesaid provisions and make such examination, surveys, and place and maintain such monuments and marks as it deems necessary. Any person injured in his property by such entry, or the placing and maintaining of such monuments and marks shall be entitled to damages for any injury sustained by him thereby, to be determined in the manner provided for determining and paying damages sustained in laying out of streets and ways in said City of Newton.

SECT. 9. This act shall not be construed to authorize the taking of land nor to render said city liable for damages for entering thereon, except for examination and survey, and for placing and maintaining monuments and marks as herein provided; nor shall it authorize said city to construct or maintain any streets, ways, parks, or drains or other public works until they have been laid out under other provisions of law therefor now existing.

SECT. 10. After the first advertisement of a hearing upon any plan under the provisions of this act, no building shall be placed or erected upon any land, shown upon said plan to be the location for a street, way, park or water-course, or land adjacent thereto or location for the construction of sewers, unless the owner thereof shall agree to remove the same at his own expense when required by said commission.

SECT. 11. This act shall not authorize the location or laying out of any highway or public place on or over any public park or burial ground, except as already authorized by law.

SECT. 12. Any court having jurisdiction in equity shall also have jurisdiction to enforce the provisions of this act, and restrain any violations thereof.

SECT. 13. This act shall take effect upon its passage.





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